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BERLIN CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS - VII

The Molotov plan for Germany: Molotov's 4 February proposal for troop withdrawal prior to German elections appears carefully designed to insure Western rejection and give the Kremlin a basis for a propaganda campaign charging that the West is blocking every Soviet effort to end the occupation of Germany. The Soviet Union can claim that troop withdrawal should end all Western fears about the prospects for really free elections in East Germany. Actual implementation of the plan would seriously weaken Western defense efforts, while the clause permitting "limited contingents" to remain behind would ensure continued security control over East Germany.

Aside from the troop withdrawal proposal and a few minor changes, Molotov's plan for a provisional government, elections and a peace treaty is identical to past Soviet proposals.

The Soviet Union has consistently presented the election plan and the treaty proposal separately without clarifying the exact relationship between the two. An outline of the steps proposed for each follows.

The formation of a provisional government and the conduct of elections

1. The East and West German governments meet to form a provisional government.
2. The provisional government draws up an election law and prepares to hold elections.
3. All occupation troops except limited contingents are withdrawn.
4. "Free elections" are held without foreign interference.
5. The new government takes office.

The drafting and signing of a peace treaty

1. The deputy foreign ministers of the four powers draft a peace treaty within three months.
2. By October 1954 a peace conference of all states concerned shall be called.
3. The treaty is signed and ratified.

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The West opposes these steps for holding elections. It demands that the four powers frame the election law and that they, with the possible addition of neutral powers, supervise these elections. There have been hints that the Soviet plan for elections would involve some discrimination against Western-oriented parties. Furthermore the West does not want treaty negotiations to begin until a German government has been elected to take part in them.

Soviet statements have been vague on the relationship between these two timetables. Molotov has proposed that the provisional government, and prior to its formation representatives of East and West Germany, take part in all steps in the drafting of a treaty. While it is possible that a government could be elected before the drafting of a treaty had reached an advanced stage, a stalemate in the framing of election laws could postpone elections at least until after the date proposed for a peace conference. Molotov did clarify one phase of this problem by stating that an elected German government must sign and an elected parliament ratify the treaty, but even this would not guarantee the participation of an elected government in negotiations leading up to the signing of a treaty. The hand of the Western powers would be greatly strengthened if they came to the conference table only after a Western-oriented, democratic government had been elected for all of Germany.

Molotov noncommittal during dinner with Eden: In his second dinner with Foreign Secretary Eden, on 2 February, Foreign Minister Molotov again passed up the opportunity to make any offers or hints of a settlement on the outstanding issues at Berlin. He made no effort to raise new subjects of conversation, and merely responded to Eden's statements.

Eden questioned him about the chances of agreement at Berlin on Far Eastern issues and an Austrian treaty. Molotov said that both were possible but that for an Austrian treaty "I would have to have something on Germany." Molotov went no further on a German settlement than to maintain that he desired one.

Molotov continued to refuse to suggest an alternative to EDC and NATO. He was particularly critical about NATO because its forces were under American command.

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